/377 cont./

342 strong gust of wind makes it collapse immediately.

From the start the builder intends this hut to serve only as a transitory makeshift to shelter his family while they rest for a few hours or for a single night. Afterwards it is a matter of minutes to take down and fold the pieces of leather. The family is again ready to travel on.

The loose cone of smooth sticks is left standing. Soon a gust of wind scatters it, and a family landing at the same place later on can easily erect a protective dwelling (22). One frequently comes

22. Fitz-Roy (a):115 confirmed the fact that the sticks of a hut framework are never purposely destroyed: "The natives allow them to decay naturally, but never wilfully destroy them" /cited in English/.

across an abandoned encampment, and there are usually enough dry sticks lying around for the loose construction of a hut. Familiar places or favorable hunting areas are visited repeatedly by different families for varying periods of time.

Both of the cone-shaped huts we have just described have a single entrance which is regularly placed away from the wind (23).

23. "Branches or tree trunks often restrict the opening where one enters. This opening is, in general, on the side opposite the wind" /translated from French/ (Hyades [f] :556).

The more solid construction has a larger interior than the one which consists of loose sticks. In the latter, the surface of the ground inside is not scraped to form a depression, but instead a low ring-shaped wall, consisting of refuse from meals, is gradually formed on the outside, which makes it difficult for cold currents of air to enter. The peak of the conical framework is not covered, and the rising smoke escapes through it. The natives know how to place and distribute the pieces of skin on the outside so advantageously that a slight draft lets the smoke escape in a straight line. Rain and snow can very easily enter, but this apparently does not annoy the inmates.

• 471 A trodden path leads from the entrance of the hut to the place where

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water is obtained and to the canoe which has been drawn up on the beach where it remains until the journey is resumed.

/378/ β. The Dome-shaped Hut

342 In the western and southwestern part of Yamana territory, including the Wollaston group, only the dome-shaped hut, mĕrana, mĕranĕka, was known. In contrast to the cone-shaped hut, it shows adaptation to the nature of the region.

A somewhat flattened hemispherical form predominates. For a larger number of occupants it is stretched lengthwise, so that the groundplan is a drawn-out oval. The poles used for the framework determine this form of the hut. The slender and flexible, thin, [157] long trunks of young beeches are chosen. It is well known that these trees do not grow well in the shade of the forest and shoot up quickly, developing a short root system that lies entirely on the surface. They can be pulled up without effort, and with only the slightest exertion the sparse tangled roots and the scanty crown of leaves can be broken off. The result is an almost smooth pole that is as flexible as a twig and that hardly varies in thickness along its entire length.

The framework made from such poles, if it is to have the desired stability, necessarily is a kind of basketwork. First a few larger poles are driven into the ground at wide intervals on the line indicating the groundplan. These include the two poles that are to flank the entrance. The natives try to achieve the dome shape from the beginning by bending and intertwining the poles, without regard to the direction or position of the poles relative to each other or to the points where they will later be fastened together. This initial framework is gradually filled out and reinforced with additional, supplementary poles that are inserted between the first ones. Most of them are so long that they reach far beyond the height of the dome down to the opposite side (24). This gives the framework as a

24. According to an often repeated, but incorrect account, the individual poles are said to meet at the top. Hyades (q) :342 also speaks inaccurately of "branches stuck in the ground and coming

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516 forward a bit when they stand, the feet are not close together but bent inward, and the knees are slightly bent. The arms do not fall down straight along the sides of the body, but in such a way that the hands rest on the front part of their thighs. They do not remain in an upright position for more than a few minutes. If they have a choice, they soon squat on the ground again, because they can rest better that way.

487 Overland routes have been used since ancient times in order to avoid a dangerous coast or a long circuitous route. The best known are three in the territory of the southwestern group, that is, from the lowest point of Tekenika Bay straight south (438),

> 438. This overland route was much used because, if possible, the people avoid circumnavigating False Cape Horn with its strong sea-swell. Moreover, the mission station in Tekenika Bay temporarily afforded a certain attraction.

from the western shore of this inlet southwestward into Bahía Doce, and from the deep inlet of Canal Carfort to Estero Ponsonby. When the mission station was located there, the first two routes were used a good deal. Sometimes people left their canoe at the landing place and covered the distance entirely on foot. This is also true of the isthmus of Caleta Awaiakir, due south to the northernmost edge in the western part of Estero Ponsonby. I was also told that the two narrow places on the northern half of Península Rous and the narrowest land connections in the middle of /623/ the large Londonderry Island were overland connecting routes. Every family was entitled to use these trails. They were [491] actually corduroy-roads over which one could rather quickly drag the canoe without much effort.

In a few places it is necessary to cross a brook on foot. There are no actual rivers south of Beagle Channel. As a ford, tuwéni, they choose a shallow place in the bed, surrounded by flat, low shores. They make no particular signs, but everyone keeps the place well in mind. They wade through the brook, of course (439).

439. Hyades (p):337, also, writes, "one

/623 cont./

487 crosses the streams by fording them" /translated from French/.

[B97] If the water is high and there is a strong current, the shores are connected by means of two sticks or short trunks and thus bridged. BD:78 gives ukilʃaraxtéka, "to put logs or beams, etc., across a stream to form a bridge" /cited in English/. As I learned, however, this kind of unsteady construction is very seldom made.

4. Nomadic Life, the Result of Environmental Conditions

182 In the beginning we emphasized the fact that the Yamana are forced to lead a migratory life because of their environment, or because of conditions in their homeland. They did not respond to this necessity purely mechanically, but, applying their mental powers, they have organized a form of economy that seems to be the best possible adaptation to their environment (440).

440. On September 18, 1858, Despard wrote in his diary: "The Fuegians in themselves cannot be other than they are" /cited in English/ and explains this in detail on the basis of negative arguments (*VP:VI*, 80;1859). Bridges (k):240 furnishes the following positive account: "The natives have developed all the more useful qualities for the life they lead: their canoes are perfect for their kind, and as much can be said for all their utensils and implements. With the materials at their disposal I do not see how they could be improved. They have adapted themselves perfectly to the land and climate in which they find themselves" /translated from Spanish/. The words of Crawshay:XXIII with regard to the Selk'nam (Vol. I, 306) applies without qualification to our Yamana: "Judged from the point of view of the Land they inhabit, they are perfect" /cited in English/.